
Incident Reporting and Documentation

402.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Documentation is a major part of each officer's job. Reports, including CR-3s, may be used to document information to assist investigators in follow-up investigations. Field release citations, warnings, field observation (FO) cards and electronic street checks are used to document law enforcement actions and/or contacts with the public. Sufficient information should be included in any form of documentation to:

- (a) Assist in prosecution.
- (b) Refresh an officer's memory during testimony.
- (c) Comply with legal requirements and Department General Orders.

402.1.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

Officers will not write an offense report when they are the victim of a crime. The victim officer will write a supplement. The offense report will be written by an officer who is not a victim.

An incident number will be assigned and all required fields completed during documentation anytime an employee observes or receives any information concerning the following, but not limited to:

- (a) Criminal or suspected criminal offenses, regardless of the victim's level of cooperation.
- (b) Citizen complaints of non-criminal incidents requiring action by the police.
- (c) Self-initiated stops
- (d) When Crime Scene personnel are assigned to an incident that was first initiated or responded to by sworn personnel and no tele-serve report has been made.
- (e) Crashes involving bicyclists will be investigated and reported as defined in Section 346.3 Crash Investigation. Non-crash events involving a bicyclist will be documented in a Versadex report using title code 4311 under the following circumstances:
 - 1. The incident occurred on a public place
 - 2. At least one of the involved subjects sustained bodily injury; and
 - 3. The incident occurred as a result of a potential criminal act, violation of the Transportation Code, violation of a City Ordinance, or the actions of another party.
- (f) Any other situation where documentation is required by law or another section of departmental general orders.

If in doubt as to whether an incident should be documented, employees shall confer with a supervisor. For the purpose of this order, Corporals may function as the designated supervisor.

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402.2 INCIDENT REPORTING

A well-written report can help make a case just as easily as a poorly written report can ruin a case. Employees have the responsibility to write clear, factual, and complete reports.

402.2.1 DOCUMENTING GENDER IDENTITY IN VERSADEx

When officers are made aware of persons who identify as transgender, gender non-binary, or gender non-conforming and need to document that encounter in police reports, field observation cards, field release citations, or warnings they will use the following guidelines.

- (a) If the person's legal name and gender marker corresponds with how the person identifies, officers will document them the same way they would any other person. Officers will make no mention of the person's former name and gender marker in their report unless it has an investigative purpose.
- (b) If the person has legally changed their name and gender marker and the Master Name Index (MNI) has not been updated:
 1. Document the person's identity on the MRE report with their new identity.
 2. Create an alias/associate name through the Entity section of the MRE report documenting the person's previous legal name and gender marker.
 3. Instruct the person to contact APD Central Records at Review.Report@austintexas.gov if they wish to update the original MNI Prime with their new legal name and gender marker.
- (c) If the person's legal name and gender marker do not correspond with how the person identifies, the officer shall enter their legal name and gender into the entities section of the report and conduct the MNI check to determine if the person is already on file. If the MNI does not exist;
 1. Create an entity documenting the person's legal name and legal gender marker.
 2. The officer will then create an alias/associate name documenting the person's preferred or Also Known As name and the gender they identify as, prefer, or present themselves to be.
 3. Officers will also enter the Association Role "Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary" into the entity of the Alias/Associates entity.
 4. Officers will document the person's legal name in the first few sentences of the narrative i.e., "On 01/01/2018, I contacted the complainant, Jane Smith (legal name), known as John Smith". Officers will then make every effort to refer to the person by their known as or preferred name and gender marker throughout the rest of the report.
- (d) If the person does have an MNI but no alias/associate name or the alias/associate name does not contain the correct information, officers will then create or correct the alias/associate name by documenting the person's correct preferred or Also Known As name and gender marker.

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402.2.2 DOCUMENTING VICTIM IDENTIFICATION IN AFFIDAVITS

In order to respect the dignity of victims, in instances where officers feel it is necessary and/or the victim requests it, officers may use the following guidelines when documenting victim identity.

- (a) Identify the victim with their legal first initial and last name the first time they are referenced in the affidavit.
- (b) Throughout the remainder of the affidavit refer to them as “the victim.”
- (c) Do not use gender identifying pronouns for the victim(s).
- (d) If multiple victims are listed in an offense report, the affidavit should refer to them as their corresponding Versadex victim assignment number, e.g., “Victim #1”, “Victim #2”, “Victim #3”, etc.
- (e) Victims should be documented in the same manner in subsequent affidavits.

402.2.3 NOTE TAKING

Good reports can be achieved from accurate notes. Memory alone is not always a reliable method upon which to document detailed information.

- (a) Brief notations concerning specific events and circumstances recorded while fresh on the mind will be useful when preparing an incident report.
- (b) Notes used in court are subject to the scrutiny of the court; employees should ensure they are accurate and pertain to the case.
- (c) Notes should contain the following:
 1. **WHO** - Persons involved.
 2. **WHAT** - Type of incident(s), an accurate account of what was observed, what transpired, and the property/evidence involved.
 3. **WHEN** - Date(s), time/s of the incident.
 4. **WHERE** - Location(s) of the incident, persons involved during the incident, property and evidence involved.
 5. **WHY** - What actions taken by persons involved led to the incident(s).
 6. **HOW** - What manner, way, means, reason, purpose, effect, extent, amount, or degree.

402.2.4 REPORT WRITING

- (a) All reports shall accurately reflect:
 1. The identity of the persons involved.
 2. All pertinent information seen, heard, or assimilated by any other sense.
 3. Any action(s) taken.
 4. Any property which the employee takes possession of, clearly documenting the:
 - (a) Events that led up to the taking possession of the property

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- (b) Purpose for taking the property
 - (c) Identification of the property by name and/or description
 - (d) Location where the property was taken
 - (e) Complete identifiers, as available, for anyone who may claim ownership of the property.
- (b) Employees shall not suppress, conceal or distort the facts of any reported incident, nor shall any employee make a false report orally or in writing.
 - (c) Generally, the reporting employee's opinions should not be included in reports unless specifically identified as such.
 - (d) Sentences with proper structure should express complete thoughts. When writing the narrative portion of an incident report, personnel should avoid writing:
 - 1. Sentence fragments which do not convey or express a complete thought.
 - 2. Run-on sentences where two or more complete ideas are joined without punctuation.

402.2.5 REPORT COMPLETION

Employees will complete and download all reports written, including CR-3s, during their shift.

- (a) Prior to downloading reports, employees should:
 - 1. Proofread reports to ensure they are sufficiently detailed for their purpose; and
 - 2. Check initial incident reports for IBR errors and fix them.
- (b) Unless authorized by a supervisor, reports and CR-3s shall be downloaded as follows:
 - 1. Reports written from incidents that lead to an arrest shall be completed and downloaded prior to the employee going back in service.
 - 2. If an arrest is made, officers shall complete an AB (Arrest Booking) report in addition to the General Offense (GO) report.
 - 3. All other incident reports shall be downloaded by the end of the employee's tour of duty.
 - 4. With supervisor approval, CR-3s may be turned in the next day, but must be completed within 24 hours.
 - 5. Officers shall ensure that all reports, including CR-3s, are downloaded correctly.

402.2.6 REPORT CORRECTIONS, CHANGES AND ALTERATIONS

- (a) Once a report has been sent and uploaded into the Versadex Data Transcription Queue, report corrections, changes and alterations shall be handled as follows:
 - 1. Minor corrections (e.g., location, business name) shall be accomplished by notifying Central Records.
 - 2. Corrections that need to be done to a narrative shall be accomplished by writing a supplemental report.

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3. Any changes to an entity's role in a report, (i.e.- subject changed to suspect or arrestee, victim #1 changed to victim #3, witness changed to suspect, etc.), can only be done by a detective/corporal or higher ranked person. The person making such change shall write a supplement detailing the reason for the change to the entity's role.
4. Corrections to CR-3s shall be made in the Brazos system immediately upon receiving a notice from the Highway Enforcement Command that the CR-3 has any deficiencies. This must be completed prior to the 9th day after the crash was originally reported.

402.2.7 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- (a) All reports routed to a supervisor's queue shall be reviewed for compliance with Department General Orders. Supervisors must ensure there are no Incident Based Reporting (IBR) errors and approve the report by completing the "Date approved" field and "Approved by" field on the front page of the GO. Reports that are incomplete or inadequate shall be returned for correction.
- (b) If an arrest was made in connection with the GO, supervisors will ensure the "Clearance status" is set to "Cleared By Arrest." "Internal status" should remain "open" or blank for detective's clearance responsibility.
 1. Supervisors will ensure their employees are assigned to the correct queue.
 2. If an employee's report goes into the wrong queue, then supervisors will contact Central Records requesting it be re-routed to their assigned queue for review.
 3. Supervisors will update a PPO's queue when they get their SOLO assignment; prior to this they will approve the PPO's report in the Academy Cadet Training Queue (HTRAIN) and ensure any reviewed documentation to include street checks, follow-ups and supplements are removed.
- (c) Supervisors shall not review reports for which they are involved in; however, supervisors that are not directly involved in an incident (e.g., witness the incident) may conduct the review. When a supervisor is involved in the incident, a supervisor one rank higher than the involved supervisor will conduct the review.
- (d) Supervisors receiving notification from Central Records or an Investigative Unit of a deficient report shall:
 1. Ensure that the responsible employee corrects the report.
 2. Take proper steps to ensure that deficiencies do not occur again (e.g., counseling, remedial training, increased monitoring and review).

402.3 FIELD OBSERVATION CARDS AND ELECTRONIC STREET CHECKS

- (a) An FO card or electronic street check is required when an officer detains an individual for more than simple, preliminary questioning to find out their level of involvement in a particular incident and no other record of the contact (other than CAD) is produced. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
 1. Detaining a suspicious person and no report is written; or

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2. Initiating a traffic stop when no field release citation or warning is issued; or
 3. Conducting a subject stop and the officer initiates a police action (e.g., detaining, frisking, or searching).
- (b) An FO card or electronic street check is **NOT** required in the following situations:
1. When an incident report, field release citation, warning or crash report (including blue form) is completed.
 2. During a non-custodial interview or casual contact where the individual is free to leave and no frisk or search has occurred.

402.3.1 DETENTION GUIDELINES

The following examples are intended to guide officers in understanding when a person has been detained. These examples are not meant to describe all possible situations where documentation is required.

- (a) Was the person free to leave?
- (b) Would a reasonable person feel they were free to leave?
- (c) Was force used to prevent the person from leaving?
- (d) Was the person checked for warrants?
- (e) Is the person being frisked or asked for a consent search?

402.3.2 MULTIPLE SUBJECTS

It is not always necessary for an officer to complete an FO card or electronic street check on every individual in a group of 2 or more persons.

- (a) If the passenger(s) in a car or the cohort(s) of a subject who has been detained by police is not the primary focus of the officer, it is not necessary to complete more than one FO card or street check.
- (b) If at any point during the contact an officer goes past the point of asking preliminary questions (e.g., detaining, frisking, searching) to determine a level of involvement for a passenger or cohort, those subjects shall also be documented.

402.4 FIELD RELEASE CITATIONS AND WARNINGS

Field release citations and warnings shall be completed as outlined in General Order 308 (Misdemeanor Citations) and General Order 342 (Traffic Enforcement).

402.5 REPORTING THE ACTIVE TARGETING OF A FIREARM AT A PERSON

By the nature of their duties, officers may be required by general orders and training to point their firearm, including impact munitions, and actively target at a person. This section does not create an additional requirement for officers to initiate an incident report; however, officers that actively target their firearm at a person shall properly document the incident as outlined below.

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402.5.1 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

- (a) Employees shall immediately notify and brief their supervisor. If their supervisor is unavailable, another field supervisor shall be notified
 - 1. When employees the rank of sergeant or above are involved in the incident, another supervisor the rank of the involved employee or higher will be notified.
 - 2. If the incident involves multiple employees with different supervisors, the lieutenant of the area where the incident occurred, or the Watch Lieutenant, will be notified and assign one supervisor to conduct the review.
- (b) Employees shall adhere to the following documentation guidelines:
 - 1. **FO Card or Electronic Street Check**
 - (a) When a report is not otherwise required for the incident, complete an FO card or electronic street check to document that a firearm was actively targeted at a person and the details of the incident.
 - 2. **Reports and Supplements**
 - (a) Add a study notation to the report to document that a firearm was actively targeted at a person or notify their supervisor the notation needs to be added.
 - (b) Document the details of the incident in the narrative of an incident report or supplement.

402.5.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- (a) Supervisors shall review the employee's incident report, supplement, FO card or electronic street check when notified of an incident involving an officer actively targeting a firearm at a person. Incomplete or inadequate documentation shall be returned for correction.
- (b) Supervisors will forward a memorandum up the chain-of-command if a safety, general order, training, equipment, tactical, or other specific issue is identified.
- (c) Supervisors shall adhere to the following documentation guidelines:
 - 1. **FO Card**
 - (a) Legibly sign the FO Card with the supervisors name and employee number that reviewed the incident.
 - 2. **Electronic Street Check**
 - (a) Add a supplement using the electronic street check incident number to document that the employee made a supervisor notification and the incident was reviewed.
 - 3. **Reports and Supplements**
 - (a) Add a study notation, if not already added, to document that an officer's firearm was actively targeted at a person.

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- (b) Add a case note to the incident report to document that the employee made a supervisor notification and the incident was reviewed.

402.6 REPORTING GANG AFFILIATION

Certain offenses may be enhanced when committed by subjects who are documented gang members. Only employees assigned to the Gang Suppression Unit may designate a subject as affiliated with a gang in the report writing system.

Employees who interact with a subject that may be affiliated with a gang should initiate an incident report titled "Gang Information" and include specific details that give rise to the belief the subject is affiliated with a gang. This includes, but is not limited to, subjects who:

- (a) Wear known, gang-related clothing (i.e., specific colors, designs).
- (b) Have known, gang-related tattoos.
- (c) Associate with documented gang members.

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